DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 202 504 JC 810 258

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TITLE Maximizing Educational Opportunity through Community Resources.
PUB DATE Jul 81
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Conference of the Correctional Education Association (Costa Mesa, CA, July 5-8, 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Role; *Community Colleges; *Correctional Education; *Correctional Institutions; *Educational Cooperation; Financial Support; Prisoners; Student Financial Aid; Two Year Colleges

ABSTRACT

In the face of increased demands and diminishing resources, educational administrators at correctional facilities should look beyond institutional resources and utilize the services of area community colleges. The community college has an established track record in correctional education. Besides the nationally recognized correctional programs established at several two-year colleges, community colleges have a long history of reaching out to underserved, nontraditional students with a range of backgrounds and abilities that are mirrored in many ways by the prison population. Unfortunately, many correctional administrators have been reluctant to allow "outsiders" in the prison environment, and the potential for prison/college cooperation has not been fully realized. In undertaking such cooperative efforts, the college and prison must: (1) develop a working relationship which recognizes the primacy of the offender's education; (2) provide the same educational opportunities that are available on campus; (3) become aware of student financial aid opportunities for prisoners; (4) tap governmental and private sources of financial support; and (5) assure that college and correctional staff appreciate each other's orientation and needs. Such cooperative efforts will promote more efficient allocation of resources, reduce duplication, and improve service to the offender. (JP)

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MAXIMIZING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY THROUGH COMMUNITY RESOURCES

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Paper prepared for the Conference of the Correctional Education Association
(Costa Mesa, CA, July 5-8, 1981)

JC 810 268

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MAXIMIZING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY
THROUGH COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Correctional education programs face an uncertain future. Financial resources are being reduced while demands placed upon them increase. This trend can be observed at federal, state, and county-operated institutions and is expected to continue well into the 1980's. Responses to this problem by institutional administrators and those responsible for the administration of education programs will determine education's role in rehabilitation during this period.

There is little dispute that most current efforts for the rehabilitation of criminals has not been effective. Van Winkle (1981) describes current rehabilitative efforts as the nation's greatest "non-success." Nevertheless, it is known that offenders exhibit a multitude of educational deficiencies and the success of overcoming these deficiencies relates to the overall success of the rehabilitative effort.

Education is essential to economic and personal growth and is equally as important for offenders as for others in the community. Changes within society during the 1980's and beyond require constant effort on the part of the individual to maintain and improve personal and job skills by taking advantage of educational opportunities (Kavanaugh, 1979). Offenders require the same educational growth experiences to make progress. Excluding them from these opportunities guarantees that they will not lead what society deems a successful or useful life (Bayh, 1978).

The remaining dilema is how to provide comprehensive education programs with fewer resources and increasing demands on those resources. Educational administrators in correctional facilities must examine every option both within and beyond institutional resources to provide services. The ultimate goal is successful rehabilitation as a primary institutional responsibility. Education has a vital role in meeting this goal.

THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN CORRECTIONS

For the past two decades--institutions of higher education, primarily community colleges--have provided a variety of educational and related services within correctional institutions (Berkley, Giles, Haskett & Karsoff, 1978, p. 794). Comprehensive programs are provided by Lee College (Houston Community College District); El Centro College (Dallas Community College District); North Shore Community College (Massachusetts); and Columbia-Greene Community College (New York). While these colleges have received nationwide recognition for their programs, many other community colleges also participate in institution-based programs. This "community service" is viewed as central to the comprehensive community college mission.

It is typical that community colleges provide services and educational programs at off-campus locations. Programs in correctional facilities are not unique for community colleges. Students who attend community colleges are not "typical" college students as their educational backgrounds and abilities reflect a very wide spectrum which is mirrored in many ways in inmate populations. Offenders, as students, can be catagorized into three groups: One group includes those who lack basic educational skills; another includes those who are considered very capable

students who have a solid foundation; and the other group consists of those who are "average" learners, many who have not completed high school but have the ability to do so.

One of the community colleges' primary strengths is to provide opportunities for unserved students, those who have been precluded from educational opportunities. Most cooperative and off-campus programs result from efforts to serve this population. Acknowledging financial limitations and the successful existing relationships between corrections and community colleges, it is imperative that further development of this resource be explored.

This will not necessarily be easy as correction's and college staffs hold firm for control of "their turf." The results, however, will be limited only by each administrator's imagination (Berkley, Giles, Hackett & Kassoff, 1978). Correctional administrators have historically been reluctant to allow "outsiders" into the prison environment. Although somewhat justifiable, because of security, the potential benefits from utilization of these outside resources far outweigh the limitations presented by security concerns. Administrators must be willing to analyze their budgetary limitations and examine and adopt strategies which allow for the maximum utilization of available resources.

DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING COOPERATIVE PROGRAMS

As previously indicated, community colleges throughout the country are providing education programs within correctional facilities. Nevertheless, the potentials of this partnership have not been utilized by most correctional institutions.

Community colleges are located in many communities throughout the country and in many instances have a correctional institution within their service area. The colleges' flexibility, adaptability, and responsiveness to community needs encourages the broadening of services into the community. Correctional administrators will find receptiveness among college administrators, each recognizing that both institutions need to modify service delivery systems in response to changing conditions.

Several key elements are essential for implementation of successful programs. Philosophically, both institutional managers must focus on the educational needs of the offenders and how best to serve them. There can be no personal agenda, such as increased enrollment statistics for the colleges and the subsequent benefits of that increase. Staffs of both facilities must establish an environment of openness and trust recognizing the goals and responsibilities of each institution.

In addition to a realistic philosophical base and a spirit of cooperation, both institutions must aim for comprehensiveness; that is, the level of services provided by the community college within the correctional setting must be comparable to those on campus (Van Winkle, 1981). Correction's personnel have the responsibility to insure a mechanism which allows the offenders to participate in the full range of programs. This not only increases the potential of success for the students, it also provides justification for funding from outside agencies. Philosophically and experientially, the community college provides an excellent vehicle for meeting these goals.

Funding opportunities for education programs sponsored by community colleges within correctional institutions increases as the colleges and students are eligible for a variety of funding assistance programs. At the federal level, a number of sources of financial aid for students is available. Among these are: Basic Education Opportunity Grants or BEOG's (Renamed PELL grants); Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants; social security education benefits; CETA; and V.A. benefits. State supported student financial aid programs vary from state-to-state and should be examined carefully to determine if the offender is eligible.

Community colleges can also submit jointly developed proposals to several federal, state, local, and private funding agencies requesting funds for operating and instructional expenses. Agencies and/or departments which fund such programs include: the Office of Education, Departments of Adult Education, Adult Basic Education, Vocational Education, and the newly established liaison office for offender education, and CETA (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act) is also helpful in funding education and training programs for offenders. Although cutbacks are projected in CETA and several of the Office of Education programs, training monies are expected to be least effected.

Obtaining resources remains a difficult task. Correctional and college administrators should be realistic in examining the funding opportunities available to them and the likelihood of obtaining these funds. Comprehensive programs jointly developed and coordinated with potential funding sources stand a better chance of funding. Community colleges should not develop programs in isolation of the correctional facilities; correctional managers should be hesitant to accept community college programs developed

without their input. While funding may not be approved on initial grant applications, persistance, quality programs, and a thorough knowledge of funding sources will bring eventual success. While waiting for outside funding, it is possible for administrators at each institution to examine their own budgets, pool resources, if possible, and begin educational programs. If the commitment is real from both administrators (the college president and correctional superintendent), ways will be found to offer the services.

OUTCOMES

The 1980's will witness increased partnerships among publically-financed institutions. The outcomes resulting from this will be better allocation of resources, less duplication, and competition and improved services.

The community college role in correctional facilities has already been established. Further development and institutionalization of this role is now needed. The overall benefits to those receiving services developed among cooperating institutions are improved educational programming from remedial to college-level preparation; access to educational technologies for computer assisted instruction (California Men's Colony, 1981); and access to a wider range of services (counseling, career development, job placement, library, and audio-visual materials to identify a few) than would be available without cooperation.

The expectation of these outcomes rests with the assumption that both institutions desire them. To realize these outcomes, faculty members must be willing to understand the uniqueness of prison life, adapt teaching styles, and have an appreciation of correctional concerns. Without orien-

tation to these issues, the program will suffer. Correctional staffs, for their part, must accept the role of education and cooperate in the coordination of these programs. Understanding the legitimate responsibilities of both institutions, removing historical barriers, which have insured "non-success" in offender rehabilitation, and persistance in meeting the educational needs of the offender will bring about a successful program.

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